

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held at the **Main Committee Room, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT** on **Tuesday 3 November 2015**.

(10.00 am - 12.30 pm)

Present:

Members: Councillor Sue Steele (Chairman)

Clare Aparicio Paul	Tony Lock
Jason Baker	David Recardo
Dave Bulmer	Rob Stickland
John Clark	Martin Wale
Val Keitch	

Also Present:

Mike Beech	Gina Seaton
Peter Gubbins	Andrew Turpin

Officers

Donna Parham	Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services)
Helen Rutter	Assistant Director (Communities)
Martin Woods	Assistant Director (Economy)
Vicki Dawson	Principal Environmental Protection Officer
David Norris	Development Manager
Jo Wilkins	Policy Planner
Jo Gale	Scrutiny Manager
Emily McGuinness	Scrutiny Manager

64. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2015 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

65. Apologies for absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Osborne, Tiffany Osborne and Garry Shortland.

66. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

67. Public question time (Agenda Item 4)

There were no members of public at the meeting.

68. Issues arising from previous meetings (Agenda Item 5)

There were no issues raised.

69. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda Item 6)

The Chairman updated Members on the visit to the Tri Authority area of West Dorset, North Dorset and Weymouth and Portland authorities. Councillors John Clark, Val Keitch, Jason Baker and Sue Osborne attended accompanied by the Scrutiny Managers and Jo Roundell Greene, Ric Pallister and Dave Bulmer in their capacity as members of the Joint Leaders Advisory Group. All members who attended commented how valuable and informative they found the visit – and supported the suggestion that a similar opportunity should be offered to all members as part of the ongoing 'Journey of Exploration'.

The Chairman highlighted to the committee that what she had taken from the feedback and presentation above all else was how the partnership worked incredibly hard for 14 months to achieve success and commented – work of this nature takes time and its vital to get it right first time.

The Chairman invited volunteers to represent South Somerset on the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel. It was noted the Panel is due to meet on 24th November. Councillors Jason Baker and Val Keitch agreed to represent SSDC with Councillor Claire Aparicio Paul as a substitute.

The Committee stated that they were content for the Chairman to continue as the Scrutiny representative on the project board which has been established to oversee the Westland's Leisure Complex project.

70. Scheme of Delegation (Agenda Item 7)

The Assistant Director (Economy) and Development Manager introduced the report. It was agreed at Full Council that a review of the Scheme of Delegation in relation to planning applications would commence in 2015. The current scheme was introduced in 2006 in response to concerns expressed by an external auditor about the length of time taken to determine planning applications. The report outlined a number of issues which had been discussed collectively with the Area Chairs (in their roles as Chair of the Council's Development Control Committees).

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Currently 90% of Planning applications are agreed under delegated powers.
- The Area Chairs felt that they exercise their authority responsibly.
- There was some discussion about the consistency of decisions made by Area Chairs. The Development Manager agreed to provide the committee with data which shows the number (and nature) of decisions agreed under delegated powers and those referred to Committee on an area by area basis.
- Members discussed the possibility of introducing some course for redress for members, should they not agree with the decision of the Area Chair. It was concluded that anything which unduly increased the time taken to determine a Planning application should be avoided but there should be a continued

commitment to openness and transparency with the reasons for decisions taken by Area Chairs clearly communicated to all involved.

- Officers advised that they would now always look to obtain a response from the town and parish council where practical.
- It would be very much appreciated if the decision of Area Chair could be made known to the Ward Member
- The Area Chairs do have meetings to ensure consistency

The Committee thanked the officers for their work in producing the report.

The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the recommendation contained in the report that there are no significant changes to the Scheme of Delegation required. It was noted that further guidance will be produced and additional training will be provided for members in relation to their role and responsibilities in the determination of planning applications.

It was also agreed that the Development Manager would provide the committee with data which shows the number (and nature) of decisions agreed under delegated powers and those referred to Committee on an area by area basis.

ACTIONS: Further guidance to be produced and additional training provided for members in relation to their role and responsibilities in the determination of planning applications – Assistant Director (Economy) and Development Manager.

The Scrutiny Committee to be provided with data which shows the number (and nature) of decisions agreed under delegated powers and those referred to Committee on an area by area basis – Assistant Director (Economy) and Development Manager.

71. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 5 November 2015 (Agenda Item 8)

Members considered the reports outlined in the District Executive Agenda for 3 November 2015. It was agreed that the following comments would be taken forward to District Executive for consideration.

Adoption of the South Somerset District Council Statement of Community Involvement (Agenda item 6)

Members were content to note the report and noted that the 6 week consultation period is a standard period and allows adequate time for respondents.

Adoption of the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2015-19 (Agenda Item 7)

Members sought clarification of the statement made on page 71 (bullet point 2) “Homelessness continues to be a major cause for concern in the district...” Members of the Scrutiny Committee felt that levels of homelessness are currently improving and are not a cause for concern?

On page 75 it mentions that we see the need to focus on the factors that make it commercially attractive for landlords to work with us yet we cannot see this in an aim? The aim at the bottom of the page is to continue working with Housing Options Team and the NLA to organise 2 landlord forums each year?

Members noted the complexity of the report and commented that based on the successful involvement of Scrutiny in developing such policies in the past, Scrutiny involvement in this case may have been beneficial as the document seemed to be a bit muddled between a strategy and a policy.

What are the monitoring arrangements with regard to the Action Plan? Scrutiny would like to have a further report on progress against the action plan if this is not being reported elsewhere.

Disposal of the Former Carrington Way Public Conveniences in Wincanton (Agenda item 8)

Members were content to the note the report and were pleased to note that the asset had been disposed of for more than the valuation figure.

2015-16 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30 September 2015 (Agenda item 9)

Members asked about the savings for staff costs at the Innovation Centre? Donna Parham - Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) explained that SSDC are now recouping costs.

Members were content to note the report.

2015/16 Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Quarter Ending 30 September 2015 (Agenda item 10)

Members noted the report and had no comments to make on the Capital projects approved prior to 2010 but not yet completed.

Update Report on Yeovil Crematorium (Agenda item 11)

Members of the Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending and answering their questions. Members were pleased to note the improvements that have been made at the Crematorium over the past 12 months and noted the ongoing work.

District Executive Forward Plan (Agenda item 13)

Members again sought clarification that the Motion agreed at Council to investigate 2 hours free parking would be reported to members via the Budget setting process, and that there would be explicit reference made to this.

Notification of an Urgent Executive Decision (Confidential) (Agenda item 16)

Members noted the report.

72. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 1 October 2015 (Agenda Item 9)

Members noted that the comments of Scrutiny to District Executive as reflected in the District Executive minutes.

73. Area Grants Application Process (Agenda Item 10)

The Assistant Director (Communities) presented the report. The report had been requested by a member of the Scrutiny Committee to allow members to consider the extent to which the Area Grant application process is applied consistently across the district.

The Assistant Director reiterated that members are the decision makers when grant applications are made to Area Committees and if they feel they do not have adequate information, they should ask for the necessary additional information and defer the decision.

Members requested that guidance is produced for all members relating to grant applications received from Academies as they represent a unique funding position. The Assistant Director agreed to provide this guidance and confirmed that Schools and Churches can apply under the grant scheme where the outcome would be for the benefit of the wider community.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for presenting the report.

ACTION: That guidance is produced for all members relating to grant applications received from Academies as they represent a unique funding position – Assistant Director (Communities).

74. Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Update Report (Agenda Item 11)

The Principal Environmental Protection Officer presented the report. A report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee in October 2014 which outlined the new provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. A number of new tools were made available to lead agencies through this legislation and at that time, members were concerned there would be resource implications for SSDC officers.

The report stated that all the requirements of the new legislation were being met from within existing resources and that discussion will continue with other agencies, in particular the police, about the ongoing implementation of the legislation.

75. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews (Agenda Item 12)

The Scrutiny Manager updated members that the final report of the Council Tax Reduction Task and Finish Group was currently being drafted and would be presented to Scrutiny in December.

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the Licensing Task and Finish Group was progressing well and that there would be a final meeting of the group on 25th November, with the final report coming forward to the December Scrutiny Committee meeting.

76. Update on matters of interest (Agenda Item 13)

Journey of Exploration - The Scrutiny Manager advised she had requested a copy of the project plan to produce the business cases to see how best Scrutiny can fit with the process and add value.

77. Scrutiny Work Programme (Agenda Item 14)

Members noted the Scrutiny Work Programme.

78. Date of next meeting (Agenda Item 15)

Members noted the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Tuesday 1st December 2015 in the Main Committee Room, Brympton Way.

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Chairman